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David Chesley and daughter Lydia, 5, walk the new section of the Bay Circuit Trail connecting to Duxbury on Saturday morning, along with trail maintenance coordinator Maureen Thomas, Bay Circuit Trail Alliance members Dick and Olga Rothschild and their grandson Henry Minsky, visiting from California.

Photo by Becca Manning

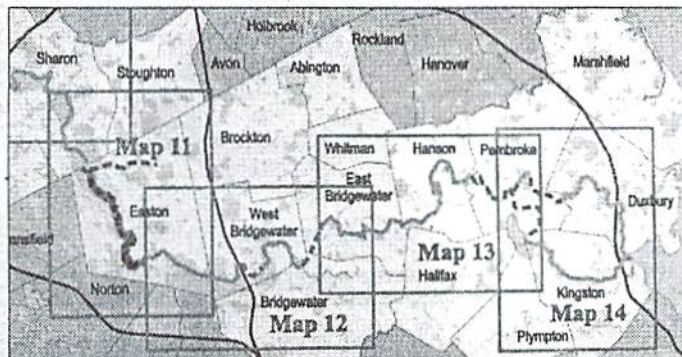
Finally in the loop

A decade after it was envisioned, Duxbury path meets up with Bay Circuit Trail near Pembroke

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When it comes to the Bay Circuit Trail, Duxbury is finally in the loop.

A key new section of the "Emerald Necklace" — a 200-mile collection of trails linking Kingston Bay to Newburyport — was officially dedicated Saturday morning. The MacFarland Trail, which starts near Pembroke High School and travels



The Bay Circuit Trail, nicknamed the "Emerald Necklace," is a 200-mile collection of trails linking Kingston Bay in the south to Newburyport in the north — providing a greenbelt around the city of Boston.

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Duxbury path meets Circuit Trail

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about two miles to Route 14, will meet up with a section of trail in Duxbury once that part is completed, creating a 25-mile loop that allows hikers to stay on the path through Duxbury, Kingston and Pembroke, where they could meet up again with the rest of the Bay Circuit Trail.

"At the present time, the way the Bay Circuit Trail goes, it runs all the way down to Kingston around by Silver Lake and then back up to Pembroke. I thought it would be great if we could make that into a loop so that people could walk directly into Duxbury," said Dick Rothschild, who for a long time represented the town on the Bay Circuit Alliance. He has since passed on the job to someone else but continues to be involved in the efforts.

"It's been an idea I've had for 10 years, and finally Chuck Lathrop really took up this idea in Pembroke and has completed their section of the trail," he said. "We're working on ours."

Rothschild said the Duxbury crew is working to clear the trail and bring it before the town for a public hearing, hopefully by the end of the summer.

Eventually, the finished trails — about three miles long — will connect to existing trails that end around the Thaddeus Chandler Sanctuary, completing the loop.



The Bay Circuit Trail path is marked by white blazes located on trees and other landmarks. A single white blaze tells hikers to continue straight ahead, while two white blazes note a change in the trail ahead. Maps are available online at baycircuit.org.

"This particular dedication has a specific significance in that, when we first started out, the town of Duxbury was one of the first towns to dedicate a section in this area, from Bay Farm," said Alan French, president of the Bay Circuit Alliance. "They got out to Upper Chandler Pond, which is not far from here, and ran into a common situation where the owner of a cranberry bog didn't want to cooperate. Because of that, it just stayed this way, with Duxbury having its section but dead-ending at Pembroke."

Eventually, the route from Bay Farm bypassed Duxbury, entering Kingston and connecting to Pembroke, literally leaving Duxbury out of the loop.

But Rothschild, French, Lathrop and others never gave up on the idea of connecting that section. Today, they are closer than ever.

While it can stand alone as a massive trail connecting conservation land from the North Shore to the South, the Bay Circuit Trail offers other benefits as well.

"It can stand as a recreational trail, but like with the Appalachian Trail, there are not too many people that want to walk the whole thing," French explained. "Its main significance is two things: one, a spine on which to grow connections to other trail systems, and two, fulfilling the original dream, which was

a belt of open space around Boston, first envisioned in the '30s. It was really amazing that people knew then that we needed what we now call an outer 'emerald necklace.'

"You could say it's impossible — how can we make a dream of a greenbelt? Well, it's happening, even in a bad economy," he added.

As the trailblazers and local residents prepared to walk the two-mile MacFarland Trail Saturday morning, Rothschild and French talked about planning a bigger walk in the future.

"I don't know — can we do it, Dick? Let's do the loop," French said. "I want to be the first one, with you, to do the circuit [through Duxbury]."

When he revealed it was a 25-mile stretch, Rothschild faltered.

"You're a true optimist," he said, laughing. Then, after French assured him they would not try to walk the whole thing in one day, he added: "OK, I'll sign up."

For trail maps and other information about the Bay Circuit Trail, visit baycircuit.org.